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Follow-up to the World Summit for Social Development and the twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly: Review of relevant United Nations plans and programmes of action pertaining to the situation of social groups: preparations for and observance of the tenth anniversary of the International Year of the Family

Statement submitted by the Foundation for the Rights of the Family, a non-governmental organization in special consultative status with the Economic and Social Council

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31 of 25 July 1996.

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The family and the economy

Concepts such as education — a human and financial investment — employment, migration, taxation, and economic and social development programmes are often perceived as related only to economic policies. In fact, such policies affect, and are directly affected by, the family unit and the resources families originate. Poverty, unemployment and social exclusion are not only individual experiences; they are undergone by the whole family structure. Therefore, the impact of economic policies on the family should be assessed and decisions taken accordingly.

Economic growth policies cannot be considered outside of the context of social development and human welfare; to do so would be to ignore the social and family groupings that constitute human society.

Once this premise is understood, the dichotomy between economic policies and social policies is dissolved. It becomes evident that the only way to address sustainable development is to recognize the central role that the family plays in community development and to empower families as active participants in the reduction of poverty and inequality and in many cases as the only resort in the case of unemployment. Families assume vis-à-vis society the obligation of structuring their family life.

Families should be seen as the central agents of social and economic development and as the essential element of civil society. For social development to be operative there should be a direct interdependence between the family and formal economies. This particular characteristic of the family is summarized in one of the occasional paper's published in preparation for and during the International Year of the Family, which states that families are engines of the economic and social development process and must be accounted for when establishing policies and priorities for economic and social development.

The International Year of the Family (1994) and the tenth anniversary in 2004

After the substantive achievements of the International Year of the Family, no adequate follow-up measures were undertaken at the United Nations or at other levels. Therefore, General Assembly resolution 54/124 of 17 December 1999 is a welcome initiative.

Following this resolution, contacts with Governments and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) have been established through the Family Unit and the Commission for Social Development. The NGO community is ready to collaborate fully in the goals of the tenth anniversary.

However, just as important as the preparations for and celebration of the tenth anniversary is the continued consideration of the family as a priority theme in the work of the Commission for Social Development. The family is closely interconnected with problems affecting family members and with social issues that in practice, tend to be viewed as unrelated to the family.

The family continues to be society's most basic organization through which family members interact with the wider environment: civil society, community and governmental institutions.

The tenth anniversary should not be viewed as an end in itself but should be the basis for future concrete action and for a focus to be maintained on family issues in the programme of work of the Commission for Social Development.

An international declaration on the family

The Foundation for the Rights of the Family feels that there is an increasing need for a declaration on the family as the basic and fundamental group of society. Such a declaration would acknowledge the roles of the family and cover the existing void.

Societies worldwide recognize that families have a number of social functions and responsibilities and that they have corresponding rights.

In many instances, these rights are stated, directly or indirectly, in national constitutions and in international instruments. While these rights are not worded as such, the concept of "rights" is implied in the repeated affirmation that the family, as the basic unit of society, is entitled to protection by society and the State.

However, in the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development (Cairo, 1994) the word "rights" does clearly appear in chapter V of the Programme of Action, entitled "The family, its roles, rights, composition and structure".

An eventual declaration has also been contemplated at the highest political levels, as witnessed in 1994 during the forty-ninth session of the General Assembly (International Conference on Families, October 1994).

We feel that a workshop should be created within the Commission for Social Development to review and extract from national laws, international instruments and existing draft declarations relevant provisions on the family. This would be used as a basis for the articulation of a United Nations declaration on the role, responsibilities and rights of the family, a project already referred to by the General Assembly in its resolution 47/237 of 20 September 1993.

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Item 3 (b) (iii) of the provisional agenda*
Review of relevant United Nations plans and programmes of action pertaining to the situation of social groups: preparation for and observance of the tenth anniversary of the International Year of the Family

Statement submitted by the following non-governmental organizations in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council: International Federation for Home Economics on behalf of the undersigned non-governmental organizations: Greek Orthodox Archdiocesan Council, Rotary International, American Psychological Association, Associated Country Women of the World, International Federation of Business and Professional Women, Center for Migration Studies, Caritas Internationalis, International Kolping Society, International Federation for Home Economics, World Federation of Ukrainian Women's Organization, International Council of Psychologists, International Federation of Social Workers, World Family Organizations, Child Welfare League and International Movement ATD Fourth World

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31 of 25 July 1996.

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As the United Nations community prepares for the fortieth session of the Commission on Social Development, we cannot forget that war, terrorism, disease and poverty have a significant impact on families. These tragedies have created or exacerbated many social problems that arise in situations of conflict and violence. Let us remember that:

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- It is families that are undermined and separated by poverty;
- It is families whose members are displaced or lost in conflict;
- It is the family that is the basic unit of all society;
- It is the family that is the centre of social development.

With this in mind, we must consider the many ways in which we can improve the lives of families throughout the world. As we prepare for the tenth anniversary of the International Year of the Family in 2004, it is imperative that all Governments are urged to:

- Provide a healthy and sustainable environment where all family members can attain economic and social well-being;
- Provide social services, including physical and psychological health, housing, nutrition, childcare, transportation and job-related training;
- Provide public education for all children especially the girl child;
- Provide family members with the opportunity to participate in community planning.

It is crucial that all members of a family be treated with dignity and respect. We must address the needs of the ageing population, which is increasing globally. In this context, we look forward to the International Day of the Family, 16 May 2002, when the programme for the day will present the theme, "Families and Ageing — Opportunities and Challenges".

In closing, we would like to recommend the following:

- The establishment of monitoring and reporting mechanisms to ensure continued progress of the recommendations set forth;
- An accurate and culturally sensitive assessment of the needs of individuals and families so that programmes and services are designed and implemented to be successful;
- We urge all Governments to seek and obtain financial recourses to support these recommendations, including microcredit programmes, global compact programmes and currency taxes.

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Follow-up to the World Summit for Social Development and the twenty-fourth special session of the General Assembly: Review of relevant United Nations plans and programmes of action pertaining to the situation of social groups: preparations for and observance of the tenth anniversary of the International Year of the Family

Statement submitted by the International Society for Traumatic Stress Studies, a non-governmental organization in special consultative status with the Economic and Social Council

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of the Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31 of 25 July 1996.

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Internationally, traumatic events occur daily. Conflicts such as those in Sierra Leone, East Timor, the former Yugoslavia and Afghanistan, terrorism such as the Tokyo sarin gas release and the attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon, and chemical and nuclear disasters such as those in Bophal and Chernobyl all create adversity in the lives of countless people. Natural disasters following earthquakes, hurricanes and floods also contribute to stress on massive levels. Rape, child abuse and torture are common experiences worldwide affecting untold numbers of individuals and families.

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We applaud the pledge made in the Copenhagen Declaration adopted at the World Summit for Social Development in 1995 to address factors associated with the following traumatic experiences: the eradication of poverty in the world; prioritization of the rights of vulnerable and disadvantaged groups; and provisions for mental and physical health care. The World Summit recognized the importance of traumatic life events in creating disability and dysfunction in countries the world over.

The salience of the Copenhagen commitments was underscored by the follow-up conference in Geneva in 2000. Numerous specific references to the needs of traumatized populations were included in the initial and final documents. We welcome and support the increasing efforts of several United Nations agencies and bodies to assess and address these needs. Indeed, interventions are needed for: abused and neglected children; abused elderly; maltreated mentally and physically disabled; victims of crime and violence; victims of torture; children in armed conflict; refugees and internally displaced persons; former combatants, military and prisoners of war; victims of disaster; and United Nations peacekeepers, civilian police, medical and humanitarian personnel, all of whom are exposed to events that have the potential to exact a tremendous emotional toll. As the World Summit made clear, most traumatic experiences are not random, unexplained events, but rather an interaction of poverty, unemployment and social disintegration. Unfortunately, the affected are the very same people who are least likely to seek and receive assistance.

Common responses to traumatic events and human and economic costs

Fortunately, most individuals are remarkably resilient. However, traumatic events, especially those of human origin, expose individuals to overwhelming levels of danger and fear. Repetitive exposure to these events depletes personal resources.

Responses to extreme stressors range from mild distress to severe reactions and chronically disabling psychiatric conditions like post-traumatic stress disorder. According to a recent report by the World Health Organization (WHO), which examined the global burden of disease, psychiatric conditions such as depression now account for 5 of the 10 top causes of disability worldwide (WHO/World Bank/Harvard University). In that document, the growing problem of trauma exposure and its psychological consequences was highlighted. By 2020, the problems secondary to violence will exceed most physical diseases.

Traumatized individuals are also more likely to have serious physical health problems, including coronary heart disease, chronic pain, gastrointestinal disorders, headaches and seizures. They also need more visits to physicians and have higher hospitalization rates. Further, traumatic events can also result in marital, family, social, occupational and financial problems for survivors. Lifetime earnings of child abuse survivors, refugees, survivors of war and genocide are adversely affected by their experiences, suggesting a serious economic burden.

Traumatic stress often arises in an environment of poverty and social deprivation; clearly the resources spent in responding to traumatic experiences could be better employed. Preventing their occurrence through policies and programmes that promote social development is a priority and a salient dimension of the culture of prevention and risk management strongly promulgated by Secretary-General Kofi Annan.

Intervention strategies

Viewing these life experiences from the perspective of traumatic stress integrates the burgeoning knowledge about intervention strategies to social and public policy makers on the local, regional, national and international levels. Intervention strategies must take into account the variability in cultures and in available resources endemic to different geographic regions. The degree of development and complexity of the health and welfare systems in each nation will greatly affect the feasibility of implementing different programmes.

Suggested mental health interventions are primarily preventive, with a goal of shortening the course of emotional problems by early identification and rapid intervention and of fostering natural resiliency. For many survivors, providing for basic needs such as safety, food, shelter, education and health care may be all that is needed. Prevention may involve provision of a safe and healthy recovery environment, reunion of family and community members and reparations and compensation. When more direct emotional help is needed, culturally sensitive psychosocial and mental health services should be integrated with other geographically, economically, socially and culturally accessible systems providing assistance to victims. Programmes can be implemented at the societal, community, network/neighbourhood, family and individual levels. These programmes vary in target and intensity and can include social policy, safety programmes, public education, coordination, capacity-building, training, self-help, counselling and clinical intervention.

Five different levels of programme intervention are proposed in our accompanying guidelines. They are elaborated in *Trauma in War and Peace: Prevention, Practice, and Policy*, prepared by the International Society for Traumatic Stress Studies through extensive consultation with United Nations agencies and bodies (Kluwer Academic/Plenum Publishers). These five levels of interventions are: societal, community, network/neighbourhood, family and individual. Interventions designed for whole populations are cost-effective. Interventions that target individuals or small groups are the most expensive and require the highest level of education and training for appropriate delivery. There are different types of interventions for each of the five levels: social policy, safety programmes, public education, coordination, capacity-building, self-help, counselling or clinical intervention.

Several fundamental assumptions apply to the delivery of all interventions:

(a) Mental health problems in communities transcend time and generations and require intervention so that violence does not recur;

(b) Problems of those exposed to traumatic stress bear some consistency across cultures, perhaps owing to the biological and cognitive dimensions of the responses to traumatic events;

(c) Interventions based on training and education are nearly universally acceptable as methods for improving stressful conditions and promoting resilience;

(d) Treatment can reduce the severity of the reactions, lend hope for recovery and prevent a downward deterioration of psychological status of the individual;

(e) When possible, community leaders, health-care providers and other key community stakeholders should collaborate in egalitarian ways in the delivery of

services and be empowered to continue doing so as external resources are withdrawn;

(f) "Train the trainer" models provide a useful method for defining the roles of external support and the indigenous internal deliverers of services;

(g) Culturally specific methods of treatment will assist planners in providing optimal interventions.

The work of the International Working Group on Traumatic Stress had as its primary objective the recognition of global consequences of traumatic events. The impact of these events can be grave and long lasting. As a caring and concerned society, we must address these needs in systematic ways to promote adjustment and minimize psychological disability. Social development and service provision are important forms of justice for those who are adversely affected by traumatic events. In the absence of justice, future peace and prosperity are jeopardized.